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ST. PATRICK  
THE FATHER OF A SACRED NATION

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# ST. PATRICK



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THE FATHER OF A SACRED NATION

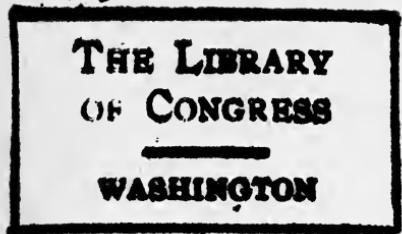
## A LECTURE

BY  
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## ST. PATRICK, THE FATHER OF A SACRED NATION.

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“And the Lord said to Abram: ‘Go forth out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and out of thy father’s house; and come into the land which I shall show thee. And I will make thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and magnify thy name, and thou shalt be blessed. I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; and in thee shall all the kindred of the earth be blessed.’—GENESIS XII.

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**A**DRESSING myself this evening to the task, so dear to every priest whose veins are warm with Celtic blood, of paying this annual tribute of praise to St. Patrick and the consecrated land of our fathers, I must, first of all, cast aside the vain hope of being able to say anything new upon a subject which for many generations has engaged the talents of one of the most eloquent

races of the modern world. Fortunately, you do not expect or wish to hear anything new on this subject; the perennial charm of the theme, like that of the old, familiar melodies of our fatherland, lies mainly in the hallowed memories which sway your souls as you listen. I have, therefore, determined to follow the well-beaten track; and I have chosen for my text that passage of Holy Writ which the wisdom of my predecessors has oftenest selected as the most appropriate. Indeed, there exists so striking a resemblance between the office and mission of the Irish apostle and his children in the New Dispensation, and the office and mission of the illustrious patriarch and his seed in the old, that this command given by Almighty God to Abraham, and these promises made to him and his descendants, may, without the change of one iota, be transferred to St. Patrick and his people. At a time when ignorance and

error were creeping over the earth and involving all the children of Adam in gross darkness, the Lord called Abraham forth from his country and his kindred to make him the father of a sacred nation, of a nation which should remain the dwelling-place of light and truth amidst the universal gloom, and which, in God's appointed time, should communicate its inherited blessings to all the kindred of the earth.

Now, coming down to the fifth century of the Christian era, we find in the calling of St. Patrick an exact counterpart to the calling of Abraham. True religion appeared to be once more upon the point of disappearing from the earth. The Eastern Churches, torn and debased by endless heresies, dissensions and schisms, were rapidly sinking into that miserable abyss of apostasy from which they have never since permanently arisen. The condition of the Western Church was equally critical;

for although, thanks to the transcendent genius of St. Augustine and the divine zeal and authority of the Roman Pontiffs, the pestilential tide of Pelagianism had been forced back to its native Britain, yet storm-clouds were gathering in the depths of the Northern forests and on the Eastern table-lands, which seemed fated to sweep away civilization, law, science and religion from the face of the globe. Already the first tremendous billows of barbarian invasion had rolled over Europe and spent their fury among the sands of Africa. Alaric the Goth had ravaged Italy and sacked Rome; Genseric the Vandal sat enthroned in the ancient city of Carthage. And this was but the beginning of evils; for innumerable hordes were still to come, urged on by love of adventure and lust of conquest, but yet more by their eagerness to escape the advancing shadow of the terrible Huns, those most savage of all barbarians, whose gigan-

tic empire, dreaded alike by Goth and Roman, was stretching itself over hills and valleys, dense forests and lofty mountain peaks, morasses, seas, rivers and trackless deserts, from the wall of China to the banks of the Rhine.

It was at this emergency that God spoke to the heart of the great saint whose memory we are gathered to honor: "Go forth out of thy country and from thy kindred and out of thy father's house, and come into the land which I shall show thee." And where is this land which the Lord has chosen? Where is the home of those who are to enjoy light whilst darkness enshrouds the earth, and liberty whilst all Europe is trampled under the feet of Goths and Huns and Vandals? Far away in the West there stood an island, moderate in extent, wonderful in fertility, vying with the emerald in beauty, whose rugged cliffs, beetling over the unconquered ocean, marked the extreme

limit of the known world. This happy island had been for untold centuries inhabited by a people who, protected by their watery ramparts from Scythian incursions and Roman conquests, and unimbued with the vain subtleties of Grecian philosophy, maintained a sturdy independence, and tenaciously adhered to the laws, the institutions and the religion of their ancestors.

So far as the natural character is concerned, the Irishman from his very first appearance on the stage of history has preserved, almost unaltered, his well-known characteristic traits. He has ever been generous in his impulses, quick-witted, impressionable and hospitable. The spirit which pervaded the legislation of our primitive ancestors was rather that of modern than of ancient civilization. Three things the Irish people have consistently detested down from the days of Milesius—despotism, the so-called “right of primo-

geniture" and landlordism—three evils, whose baneful dominion in the island has been founded on the ruins of the nation's independence. By their ancient law of tanistry, all dignitaries in the land, from the chief monarch down to the humblest canfinny, were chosen by the free suffrages of their countrymen. "The law of tanistry," says an unfriendly English historian (Lingard II, 86), "regulated the succession of all dignities from the highest to the lowest. It carefully excluded the sons from inheriting, as of right, the authority of their father; and the tanist, or heir-apparent, was elected by the suffrages of the sept during the lifetime of the ruling chieftain. The eldest of the name and family had, indeed, the best title to this distinction; but his capacity and deserts were previously submitted to examination, and the charge of crime, or cowardice or deformity might be urged as an insuperable objection to his appoint-

ment." So jealous were our forefathers of their political liberties! Nor did it agree with their notions of equity that the first-born son should enjoy an exclusive or pre-ponderating right of inheriting his father's wealth. Their law of gavelkind prescribed that a man's movable property should descend to all his son's equally, without any consideration to primogeniture. And what about the land? Why, a landlord has always been an odious character in Ireland. The primitive Irish preferred pasturage to agriculture, and I believe that preference is again become quite fashionable among the landlords over there. A man in the olden times possessed his land only so long as no death occurred in his sept. But, to quote Lingard, "at the death of each possessor the landed property of the sept was thrown into one common mass; a new division was made by the equity or caprice of the can-funny, and their respective portions were

assigned to the different heads of families in the order of seniority." This regulation, whilst it impresses us favorably as evincing the national love of fair play, must still be admitted to have been a crude and primitive arrangement. But it is amusing to observe that what modern socialists vaunt as a novel invention of the nineteenth century was fairly tried and wisely discarded centuries ago by the common sense of the Irish people. Their criminal code bore the impress of the national gentleness ; for it is agreed that they always shrank from the actual infliction of capital punishment. Their religion consisted in the worship of all those great objects in nature which are most apt to excite the veneration of a race highly imaginative and poetical—the sun and moon, the consuming flame and the running stream, the mighty tempest, the awful mountain, and, above all, the mysterious shade of their oaken groves. And thus they con-

tinued for ages unmolested to sing to their wild harps the praises of their gods and the renown of their ancient heroes.

This is the nation which the Lord has chosen for His peculiar inheritance ; this the land upon whose fair horizon the Sun of Justice is about to rise, never more to set. Ireland, hitherto thou hast borne no yoke. Thy hills have never echoed the shouts of invading legions ; no captive Irish Chieftain has ever graced the triumph of a Roman General. But that which Cæsar could not do, Christ will do. Pagan Rome dared not attack thee ; but Christian Rome has already given the signal for the assault. Behold, hastening over mountain and sea, armed with a staff received from JESUS, strengthened with ample jurisdiction from the Supreme Pontiff, fearless, undaunted, Patrick advances, a host in himself. No novice in the apostolic warfare is this new champion of Christianity. In-

ured to toil, as well by the hardships of bondage as by long years of extraordinary penances, instructed in the science of God by the most distinguished masters of his age, having served under two great commanders in a brilliant campaign against heresy in Britain, he brings to the task allotted him by Providence ability, skill, experience and the prestige of past success. He lands upon the coast of Erin, uplifts the standard of the Cross and takes possession of the island in the name of Christ and of His Vicar. The peaceful glories of his conquest it is needless to recount, for they are indelibly engraven upon the hearts of a grateful race. The Christian world viewed with astonishment the unprecedented spectacle of a nation gained to the faith without bloodshed, without persecution, almost without resistance. Never did the arrows of the Divine word fly with such swift and telling effect as when shot

from the lips of St. Patrick. That Gospel which had fallen powerless upon the proud ears of Epicureans and Stoics in the Areopagus, although preached with all the inspired energy of St. Paul, fell with a crushing weight upon the artless idolatry of Tara. Before the triumphant march of the Irish apostle idols fall and vanish forever; warlike chieftains bow their heads to baptism; princely youths and maidens put on the monastic garb; the Druids are changed into priests and bishops, and every harp within the land is attuned to sing that Patrick's God is become the God of Erin. Thus has the obedience of the new patriarch, the Christian Abraham, been amply rewarded. He is in possession of the land which the Lord had shown him. He is become the father of a great nation, which, to the end of time, will enshrine his blessed name in their heart of hearts with religious enthusiasm. Generations shall come and go, but

the memory of St. Patrick will never fade. Happy Ireland! which welcomed so great an apostle; and happy apostle! whose lot was cast among so affectionate a people.

But now his work is done, and the time has arrived when the saint is destined to receive a second call from Almighty God—a call, this time, not to labor, but to repose, not to go forth again upon a lifelong pilgrimage, but to enter into his eternal home. From his episcopal throne in Armagh the aged conqueror beholds the entire nation subject to his spiritual authority, and through him subject to Rome, and through Rome subject to Christ. Religion flourishes throughout the land with the simplicity of infancy combined with the full vigor of manhood. How changed is Erin now from what she was that day when Patrick in his early youth was cast upon her shore a despised and downcast slave. And oh! if we were worthy, my friends,

to enter into the sanctuary of our venerable father's meditations, as he recalls one by one the events of his long and checkered career. It is only now, when the drama of his life is hastening to its close, that he can fully appreciate the beautiful unity of design which has reigned throughout it, and can perceive how all the occurrences of his life, even the most painful and the most mysterious, were by the hand of God woven skillfully into the great mission for which he had been chosen. But thy trials are now past, thy day's work is finished ; "go forth," faithful servant of the Lord ; thy Master's arms are extended to embrace thee.

In this supreme moment, one thought only, I think, disturbed the fullness of the saint's blessedness—the thought that in Ireland no one had been found in all these years of his labors who would add to his apostleship the crown of martyrdom. How

he envied St. Peter his cross, St. Paul his sword, St. Bartholomew his knife, St. John his caldron ! He had been like these princes of the Church in life, wherefore shall he be unlike them in death ? *They* witnessed unto Christ amidst excruciating torments ; is he placidly to expire on his couch ? They died hooted and scoffed at by an unbelieving populace ; he finds himself surrounded by loving and attentive children. What means this innovation upon the fate of Apostles ? But courage, great saint ; God looks not upon the gift, but upon the heart. Though the Irish are not a people destined to make martyrs, but rather to become martyrs, yet has not thy whole life been one prolonged martyrdom ? Thy slavery, sanctified by prayer and patience, was a martyrdom ; thy sacrifice of country, of kindred and of the comforts of thy patrician home was a martyrdom ; the ardent zeal which consumed thy

life in the hardships of the apostolate was a martyrdom; and whatever may be wanting to thy crown in the shape of torments or persecutions thou shalt receive vicariously in the heroic sufferings of thy children in future ages. Happy fate! Ireland's apostle suffers not *from* his children, but *in* them and *with* them. I love to dwell upon this sweet scene of St. Patrick's dying moments. It is a spectacle of which Ireland alone can boast. She alone manifested for her apostle during his lifetime the same filial reverence which she has paid to his memory since his death. The nation stood at his bedside to cheer his declining strength with tender solicitude. And the saint, whose love for his children was stronger than death, forgetful of himself, concentrates his failing energies upon the one great object of his affections and his triumphs. Gather about your aged father, children of Ireland, and catch the last precious words which are

quivering upon his lips. "Grant me this favor, O Lord," he murmurs, "that my people may remain ever true to the faith I have taught them." With this prophetic prayer on his lips, the blessed man of God passed away to his heavenly home. He passed away ; but his spirit remained with his people, and throughout all the vicissitudes of their extraordinary history they have remained ever "true to the faith."

Indeed, the history of Catholic Ireland seems to be only the sequel or prolongation of the life of her apostle, and, on the other hand, the life of St. Patrick might pass for an excellent allegory of the subsequent history of his people. That same admirable unity of design which we observe running through the life of St. Patrick, that same Providential shaping of all circumstances to the working out of a Divinely appointed mission, is unmistakably discernible in the history of Ireland. She was

destined to be the sacred island, the eternal home of orthodoxy, the seminary of apostles; and this peculiar mission demanded and procured for her the special fostering care of Divine Providence. But, before advancing further, it may be useful to make a few preliminary remarks.

Man is a very complex piece of work, and may therefore be viewed from a hundred different standpoints. Hence the histories that can be written of him are as multifarious as are the relations in which he stands to things seen and unseen. Let the warrior, the statesman, the political economist, the scientist, the man of letters and the moralist, sit down to write histories of the self-same race or nation, and you will be surprised at the kaleidoscopic variety of their respective productions. The man of war will entertain you with a narration of brilliant exploits on field and wave. Kings and emperors at the head of mighty arma-

ments are his heroes; sieges and battles, the impetuous charge and the gallant repulse, the roar of the cannon and the gleam of the bayonet—these form the matter of his drama. The statesman leads you into the cabinet of princes, to teach you how treaties are concluded, laws enacted and the populace ruled. The political economist revels among bewildering statistics, shows how the resources of a country are developed, and expounds the philosophy of supply and demand. The scientist follows the student into his quiet chamber, and traces the steady advancement of human knowledge. The man of letters narrates the growth of literature and language. The moralist studies the vicissitudes of the eternal struggle between virtue and vice. Humanity presents a different aspect to each of these historians; and very often an age which is pronounced by one of them most dismal and disastrous

will be lauded by another as the brightest in the annals of the race. I have mentioned several classes of historians; but these do not exhaust the capabilities of the subject. There is another relation in which a man or a nation may be viewed; and it is the highest and noblest of all our relations —our relation toward our Almighty Creator. This is not only our highest relation; it is, moreover, one which animates all the other relations. Men were not created to be food for cannon, as the warrior seems to suppose; nor to be the dupes of politicians; nor for any other terrestrial object, high or low. Man's destiny is to work out the supreme designs of Divine Providence. That historian is, therefore, the wisest who, with due reverence, endeavors to read human events in the light of God's high decrees.

Now, Ireland's destiny is so patent that he who runs may read it. Geographically secluded from the profane world, she was

chosen by the Almighty, like Palestine of old, to be His inalienable inheritance, the impregnable citadel of Revelation and the seminary of an Apostolic race. In a world so tempestuous as this, where decay and mortality are written upon the face of all things, where the greatest nations, as well as individuals, are prone to fall and to become persecutors of that faith of which they are the natural protectors, it was necessary that the Church should have some nation upon whose fidelity she could securely rely, and from whose bosom she could, in times of dire distress, replenish her spent forces. That chosen nation is Ireland, my friends. Whilst Rome has always been, and will always remain, the head of the Church, Ireland is her right arm. The Roman Pontiff is the General-in-Chief of the people of God; but the Irish are his forlorn hope, ever to be found in the thickest of the combat, passionately

attached to their Chieftain, and yielding a filial and rational obedience to his venerable commands. In thus extolling Ireland I have no wish to rob other nations of their due meed of praise. Many of them have deserved well of the faith. Many of them have powerfully contributed to its propagation and suffered much for its preservation. But none of them contests with our Isle of the Saints the honor of being in the most complete and tender manner consecrated to the religion of Jesus Christ. All other nations have a profane as well as a sacred history. They have achieved power and glory through wars waged in other interests than those of religion—interests often-times opposed to those of religion. The history of Ireland since her conversion, on the contrary, has become thoroughly identified with that of her religion. Her national greatness and her national glory

are derived from her faith. If she has taken to arms, it has been to defend her faith; for Ireland's enemies have invariably begun by overturning her altars.

I am aware that this supernatural way of presenting Irish history is not palatable to some individuals of our race who are tainted with the materialistic infidelity which infects the present age. *Some* there are—not many, indeed, for materialism and infidelity are snakes that do not thrive in Irish soil—who hear this Catholic doctrine with ill will. They think it likely to breed a fatalistic apathy in the national breast. They fear it may dull the edge of patriotism and reconcile the popular heart to oppression and treason. Impious folly! Do they imagine the Irish are like the Turks, that they cannot distinguish God's eternal purpose from man's petty malice? Believing as we do that Christ's sufferings were pre-

destined, are we the less disposed to detest the cowardice of the unjust judge, the fury of the infatuated populace or the base treachery of Judas Iscariot? You forget, too, my infidel philosopher, that we are discoursing, not upon Ireland's unknown future, but upon her glorious career in the past. That past cannot be understood without a constant reference to God's adorable counsels. To the eye of the infidel history presents nothing but a disjointed succession of contradictory events, which follow each other without order, without meaning. It is only when we survey the life of an individual or of a nation from the standpoint of Divine Providence that we are enabled to soar above "the whips and scorns of time, the oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely," and to seize things with the intelligent eye of the Christian philosopher.

But to return from this digression.

There are, as I remarked, so many points of analogy between the life of St. Patrick and the history of Catholic Ireland that a poetical mind might fancy the saint ended his mortal career only to begin life over again, on a grander scale, in his children. The life of St. Patrick divides itself into three distinct periods, the first two of which are preparatory to the glorious labors of the third. The first sixteen years of his life were years of peace and happiness, unmarred by sin or sorrow. During this period the young saint, sheltered from this evil world in the bosom of a religious home, and surrounded by models of Christian virtue, expanded in the rich bloom of unsullied innocence. Then followed the epoch of his trials in bondage, when the tender plant was plucked from its native soil and cast upon the bleak Northern hills. Here in the stern school of adversity the delicate became rugged; the child

was developed into the man; and the modest youth began to dream of bold enterprises and vast spiritual conquests. Thus St. Patrick was trained to the Apostolate; and did not Divine Providence pursue the self-same course with the Irish nation? In the history of Catholic Ireland we discern these same distinct periods—the blameless childhood, the stormy adolescence and the apostolic manhood.

1. Whilst darkness and desolation were covering the rest of the earth—whilst Huns and Saxons, Goths and Vandals, Moors and Saracens were carrying despair and death into all corners of Europe, Asia and Africa—whilst one by one the bright lights of ancient Christendom—Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, Carthage—were being extinguished—Ireland, exempted by a special grace of the Almighty from the universal misery, continued for three centuries to be the unmolested sanctuary of the

faith, the asylum of learning, the nursery of saints and missionaries. How wistfully we now look back through all the intervening horrors upon those happy days of the nation's childhood, when, quite unconscious of the dark future in store for her, she consecrated her virgin heart to the service of God; when churches and monasteries crowned each hill and nestled in each dale; when the air was ever laden with melodious psalmody and the perfume of prayer; when, unable to contain within her generous Celtic breast the fullness of her joy, she sent forth, as a presage of her future apostolic labors, her Columbas to the Isles of the North, her Columbanuses into the heart of Europe, and launched her Brandans upon the western waves to search out new realms for Christ.

The exceptional character of Ireland's position was fully appreciated by the other nations of Europe. She was looked upon

as sacred ground, and her people were recognized as enjoying in a very special manner the friendship of our Saviour. I narrate a thrice-told tale. To her sheltering bosom there flocked from all Christendom studious souls thirsty for knowledge, repentant souls longing for seclusion, virtuous souls in quest of refuge and models; and they found knowledge in her schools, discipline in her cloisters, and the humblest peasants in the land could teach them, by precept and example, the path of Christian perfection. For the Irish at their conversion did not put on religion as an outward garment. The Catholic faith sank deep into their souls, and became the center of their private and public life. It absorbed and assimilated all their thoughts and aspirations. For their faith they lived and studied; in it they reposed their individual happiness and their national glory.

2. But a change was to come over the

face of the island. Indeed, these centuries of happy tranquillity were intended to be only a period of preparation, only an introduction to its history. A Christian nation can no more than a Christian individual hope to follow Christ by any other way than that of the Cross; and as well the nation as the individual must employ such periods of peace and quiet in preparation for the struggle which is certain, sooner or later, to supervene. That fateful day at length arrived for Ireland. I can fancy, my brethren, a scene in heaven like unto that which ushered in the sorrows of patient Job. Once more, methinks, "on a certain day when the sons of God came to stand before the Lord," the foul prince of darkness obtruded his hateful presence upon that blessed company. Then spoke our Divine Lord: "Hast thou considered my chosen people, that there are none like them in the earth, simple and upright men,

and fearing God and avoiding evil?" But Satan, answering, said: "Doth Erin fear God in vain? Hast not thou made a fence for her and her house and all her substance round about, blessed the works of her hand, and her possession hath increased on the earth? But stretch forth thy hand, and touch all that she hath, and her bone and her flesh, and then shalt thou see that she will bless thee to Thy face." The Almighty, willing to glorify His elect and the power of His grace, took up the challenge so impudently cast before Him, and gave permission to Satan to wreak his fury on the devoted nation, making, however, the same reservation in her favor which He had made in the case of His servant Job, that the Evil One must spare its life. A conflict thereupon ensued which stands unparalleled in the annals of the human race. Never were the engines of infernal warfare brought to bear upon the children of men

with such preternatural skill, with such overwhelming force, with such fiendish cunning, with such stubborn persistence, yet never did the infernal serpent sustain so thorough, so crushing a defeat. Wars and famines; invasions, conquests, confiscations; the cruel steel of a ferocious soldiery; the brutal whip of an implanted band of robbers; the haughty insolence of a State-fed heretical clergy, and the canting hypocrisy of swarms of professional proselytizers; the ingenious machinery of an infamous legislation—in fact, what evils that can afflict a nation were not made use of in the attempt to eradicate the faith from the breasts of the Irish? Yet every new onslaught of the enemy issued in a fresh triumph for Catholic Ireland. Satan wrested from her everything but that which was the sole aim of all his efforts—her Faith.

No doubt, my friends, the subject of Ire-

land's unutterable woes has often forced itself upon your minds, and at the remembrance of her sufferings the tear has sprung to your eye, and your cheeks have burned and your breast heaved with just indignation at the inhuman wretches who, age after age, have lent themselves to Satan to be the instruments of his cruelty. But have you never looked beyond the physical miseries of each day and hour? Or have the wails of Erin's exiles, the dying moans of her outcast children, as they famish by the wayside, and the bitter torments of her legions of martyrs so stunned your soul as to make you incapable of appreciating the moral grandeur of the scene? Oh, then, you have never conceived thoughts worthy of Ireland! You have seen nothing but her humiliations; you have not discovered the Divine glory which shines through them. You have seen the wretched work of man, but not the all-shaping, merciful

hand of God. My mission, brethren, is one, not of hatred, but of charity; hence you must not expect to hear from me either a pathetic narration of Ireland's wrongs or a vehement invective against her oppressors. Indeed, whilst I am very far from wishing to extenuate the infamy of those who have outraged and devastated the land of our fathers, yet, instead of fostering rancor against them, I feel more disposed to bless their infatuated malice, which, under the supreme control of Providence, has so chastened and sanctified the nation as to make it the model of Christendom. If Ireland, like the other nations, had "rested on her lees, and had not been poured from vessel to vessel nor gone into captivity" (Jer. 48: 11), she, too, would have been a profane nation, with her measure of worldly greatness and with worldly ambitions and aspirations; but she would not have attained that noble station in the

Church to which she was predestined, and for which a long series of trials was the indispensable preparation. Who does not sympathize with St. Patrick under the lash of his captors? But Patrick's bondage was necessary for Ireland; and, brethren, Ireland's bondage was necessary for the world. She was led into captivity, not only that the world might have a brilliant illustration of the heroism of Christian patience and resignation, but, especially, that it might have what it sorely needed, a nation of Apostles.

3. Yes, my friends, after withstanding for ages the open violence and the insidious wiles of Satan, Ireland was advanced to the highest station in the Church. "God," says St. Paul, "has placed in His Church, first of all, the Apostles;" and by an unparalleled grace the Irish people were raised in mass to this sublime office. Other nations have, indeed, given birth to illustrious

apostles. Spain may well be proud of St. Francis Xavier, Britain of St. Boniface and Italy of St. Augustine. But Ireland has done still more: she has not sent forth isolated missionaries; she has gone forth herself to the extreme ends of the earth. Oh, how often in these latter days has not that stern but salutary voice of God resounded through the island: "Go forth out of thy country and from thy kindred and out of thy father's house;" and even though that high decree came disguised in the harsh tones of a bailiff, with what filial acquiescence in the Divine Will have not millions of her children bidden a sad farewell to their native land, their humble hearth and their dearest kindred, and gone forth to penetrate the wilds of America, the jungles of India and the sands of Australia! Truly, "there are no speeches nor languages where their voices are not heard; their sound is gone forth into all the earth."

With unflagging zeal and superhuman endurance they have planted the faith under every star of heaven, making the desert and the wilderness bloom with all the beauty of Carmel and Saron. Oh! island of the saints, how sublime is thy destiny! Everything pertaining to thee is extraordinary and supernatural. Thou seemest to belong to a different world from this, thou art so unlike the other nations of the earth. Thou hast been trampled on by every passer-by. Thy haughty invaders have disdained to call thee a nation. They have wished to sweep thee, with thy language and thy institutions and thy religion, from the face of the earth. Yet, lo! that which men despised and rejected, the same has become the corner-stone of the edifice of God. The more they trampled on thee, the more deeply didst thou cast thy roots; the more they shook thy aged trunk, the more rapidly didst thou shoot forth thy far-spreading branches.

What is there in nature more beautiful to behold than a majestic forest tree in the spring-time, as it decks itself with the luxuriance of its foliage and blushes in the pride of its variegated blossoms? How you wish it could remain ever thus undisturbed! But that ought not to be; for then it would live and die in selfish barrenness. To be of immortal usefulness it must, first, be shorn of its beauty; the fierce equinoctial blasts must wrench its seeds from it, and spread them broadcast over the earth, and cover them from the wrath of winter with the leaves torn from its moaning branches. Thieving birds must carry away its fruits to scatter them on a distant soil. If, then, you return to view that noble plant after wind and storms have worked their will upon it, you will hardly recognize in the dreary, naked wood the object of your admiration a few months ago. But wait a little. The winter will soon be past, and

you will find that the harm has not been serious, much less irreparable. It will bud and blossom again in a glorious resurrection ; and behold ! far and near a thousand saplings are springing up, each reproducing the vigor of the parent stock. In like manner, whilst nations which have enjoyed serene prosperity have, so far as the sacred cause of Revelation is concerned, lived and died sluggish and inactive, Ireland, rudely shaken by every wind of heaven, has, without losing much at home, multiplied herself in every quarter of the globe. Why, then, ought we not to bless the whirlwind which has scattered our noble race ? The tears of the exile were necessary to the propagation of the faith ; and whilst we sympathize sincerely with the suffering individuals, we must never lose sight of the Divine purpose which their sufferings are predestined to effect.

In the prosecution of this analogy be-

tween the life of St. Patrick and the history of his people, we discover another point of resemblance well worthy of consideration. St. Patrick was sent into captivity that he might become familiar with the language and customs of the people whom he was chosen to evangelize. So, too, the Irish, having been selected by the Lord for the important work of evangelizing a great part of the world, were subjected to the sway of that nation whose wonderful enterprise has made her language the most generally spoken by the human species. How little did the English dream, when they were planting their proud banner on every remote corner of the globe, on every island, on every coast, that Providence was making use of their ambition for the advantage of a nation which they despised and of a religion which they detested? Yet such the event proves to have been the case. England's discoveries and conquests simply

paved the way for the Irish and their holy religion. England forced the Irish to drop the language of their fathers, and adopt that of their oppressors. She was but too glad to offer them her ships, and induce them to establish themselves in her colonies. But, my friends, England has lost, and is losing, her hold upon her colonial possessions; whereas the Irish and their blessed faith remain, and will remain, please God, till the end of time.

But let us bring this discourse to a conclusion. I have endeavored to show how far-reaching and enduring St. Patrick's work has been. He is become, in very deed, the father of a great nation, whose distinctive trait is its inviolable fidelity to God. Like their apostle, the Irish people were great and holy in the days of their prosperity; their greatness and holiness were enhanced during the long ages of their trials; and they have arrived at the summit of spir-

itual glory now that God has scattered them far and wide to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

Be mindful, therefore, of your mission, Irishmen and children of Irishmen, and at the same time appreciate the formidable responsibility which that mission lays upon you. No doubt, our great race will achieve its sublime destiny, notwithstanding the frailties of individuals; for though there may be weak and unworthy brethren amongst us—though there may be Irishmen who are drunkards, and Irishmen who are dishonest, and Irishmen who by other vices dishonor their country and scandalize the unbeliever—yet the mass of our people are, in practice and principle, “true to the faith.” But it is well for us to remember that it was for no trivial purpose we or our fathers were transplanted into this fertile region. Divine Providence has placed us here, as on a mountain top, that

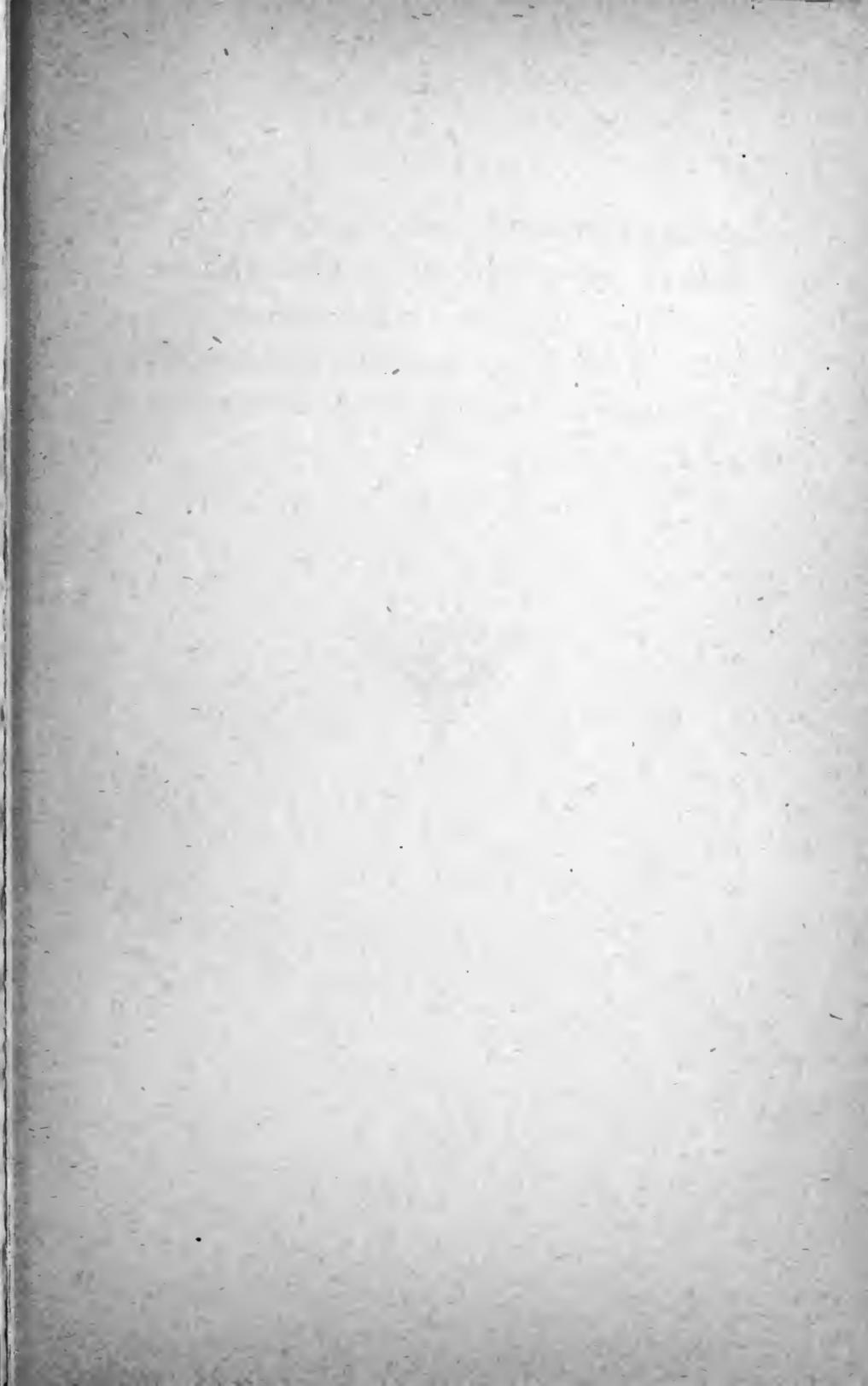
men may have full scope to observe us, and may value our faith by the works of righteousness which it engenders within us. And, my friends, this great American nation into which we are incorporated deserves well of us; for when the old world had cast us off, it received us with open arms and welcomed us to an equal share in the blessings which the Lord of nature lavishes upon it. But it is our privilege, as well as our duty, to make a grateful return for this hospitable reception; for whilst America possesses in abundance gold and silver, food and raiment, yet, in a higher sense, she is sadly destitute. She lacks that better food which fills the soul, and this food she must receive from our hands. Faith perfected almost to vision, supernatural love of God, unsullied chastity—these are the spiritual riches with which the half-clad, half-starved emigrant comes laden to these shores, and they are an ample remunera-

tion for the many kindnesses which he receives.

In conclusion, let us, as is meet and proper, cease not to offer up fervent prayers to God, through the intercession of St. Patrick, for the welfare of the land of our fathers. She has suffered enough; she has been tried enough. "How long, O Lord, how long!" Already through the many rents made by the stormy indignation of the civilized world in the wretched patchwork of this last of Irish Coercion Acts which is now weighing heavily upon her, we can catch most certain glimpses of those happier days, long sighed for, long deferred; and I am confident that when the noon-day of her temporal glory shall arrive, Ireland will remain, as she has hitherto remained, true to her mission, "true to the faith." But of this I am sure, that if, as we earnestly desire, peace with its abundance and liberty with her manifold

blessings return to nestle among her green hills, she will ever look back with an honest pride upon the ages of her sorrows; she will "rejoice for the days in which she was humbled, for the days when her eyes saw evils."









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